

LESSONS
IN
VOCAL EXPRESSION.

Course I.

PROCESSES OF THINKING IN THE
MODULATION OF THE VOICE.

BY

Aminal
S. S. CURRY, (Ph.D.)

AUTHOR OF "THE PROVINCE OF EXPRESSION"; DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF EXPRESSION;
INSTRUCTOR IN ELOCUTION AT YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL AND NEWTON THEO-
LOGICAL INSTITUTION, AND FORMERLY IN BOSTON UNIVERSITY
AND HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

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INTRODUCTION.

EXPRESSION implies cause, means, and effect. It is a natural effect of a natural cause, and hence is governed by all the laws of nature's processes. The cause is in the mind, the means are the voice and the body.

Expression may be improved by stimulating the cause, by developing the organic means, — the voice and body, — by training them to be more flexible and responsive to the mind, or by bringing them under better control; and, lastly, by securing a better knowledge of right modes of execution and greater skill in their use. The process of improving the voice and making it a more adequate agent in expression is called Vocal Training. The process of improving the body and making it a better agent for the manifestation of the soul may be called Pantomimic Training. The manifestation of the actions of the mind through the body may be called Pantomimic Expression, and that through the voice, Vocal Expression.

The word "Expression" covers every possible revelation of a human being, and implies any means or mode of manifesting the conceptions or emotions, the conditions or dispositions of the soul. Every art is an art of expression. Expression also names the manifestation in animals of their instinctive actions and conditions.

Man has many modes of expression. His natural expression in speaking is composed of three forms: Verbal, or the symbolic representation of ideas; Vocal, or the manifestation of the processes of the mind, of feelings and emotions through the modulation of tone; and third, Pantomimic, or the manifestation of emotions and conditions through the motions and positions of the various parts of the body. The term "elocution"

is often applied to the whole of delivery, to all Pantomimic and Vocal Expression, and also to Articulation. Elocution is also used in a narrower sense as standing merely for the technique of Vocal Expression, and at times it is applied merely to right articulation or the utterance of Verbal Expression.

Vocal Expression, to which the present work is devoted, is that part of delivery which refers to the manifestation of the processes of thought and feeling, the emotions and relative conditions of the man, through the modulations of his tones. It does not include articulation, or pronunciation, which refer to the moulding of tone into words, and which will be included in the work on Vocal Training. Vocal Expression, as here used, refers simply to the modulations of the inflections, the textures, and the resonance of the voice, by the actions of the mind and the emotions and conditions of the man.

There are two modes in common use for the improvement of Vocal Expression. The first is by Imitation, which endeavors to improve Expression by making one man copy the speech of another who is supposed to speak better than himself. The other method endeavors to analyze the modulations of the voice as independent acts of the will, and to exercise the student upon them so as to give him conscious control over them. It professes to have discovered the right signs of emotion, and by teaching these signs professes to teach delivery objectively and scientifically.

Both of these methods are imperfect. Imitation overlooks the fact that men are different in temperament, in rhythm of thought, in the pitch of their voices, and in the texture and resonance of tone, and that they can never be made alike without superficializing and destroying individual elements of power. The second, or mechanical method, even if it recognized, as it does not, the true signs of emotion, causes the student to think of the modulation of his voice as an end and not as a means; to think of the sign rather than of the thing signified. The focus

of the mind is transferred by such a method from the centre or cause, the process of thinking, and placed upon the effect, or the mere mode of delivery. Those actions of the voice which in nature are always free and constantly varying according to the spontaneous effect of the process of the mind in thinking and feeling, have been made fixed and subject to rule. An artificial set of signs has been arranged which the student must learn and use in recitation and speaking according to rule. Moreover, many of the most important of the natural modulations of the voice have been overlooked and eliminated by this system, and the natural, free, and flexible modulation of inflection and changes of pitch have been interfered with and made monotonous and mechanical.

Both of these methods proceed from without inward, and not as nature always does, from within outward. They tend therefore to make men unnatural, and have caused prejudice against elocution in some of the ablest and most observant minds. The highest requisite of all expression, especially Vocal Expression, is that it shall be natural. It must be in some sense a direct and spontaneous result of its cause, which lies in the processes of thought, the earnestness, the purpose, the feeling, and the general attitude of the man who speaks. Vocal Expression, in fact, whenever it is true and adequate, is the nearest to nature, the most spontaneous and unconscious, of any actions peculiar to man. Many of the modulations of the voice are as involuntary as the twinkle of the eye. No method has ever yet succeeded in making them completely voluntary without making them superficial and mechanical. In short, Vocal Expression is the most subjective and spontaneous form of art; it is the most immediate manifestation of thought and feeling. It does not represent products, but manifests processes; it reveals emotions and conditions; it is the out-breathing of the life of the soul.

This book is an endeavor to meet the problem of delivery from another point of view, and to arrange some steps for its

improvement different from either of the two methods commonly in use. There is an endeavor to recognize the fact that the technical actions of Vocal Expression must be studied side by side with the actions of the mind, which they manifest. Everything proceeds upon the principle that in natural expression every modulation of the voice is the direct effect of some action or condition of the mind, and that very frequently wrong action of delivery can be traced to wrong action in thinking, such as one-sidedness, lack of control over emotion, lack of imagination, or the fact that conception is too abstract. Delivery is a question of responsiveness. A fault of delivery may be caused by inadequate or incorrect mental action, or by some hindrance to the transmission of this mental or volitional action through the organism; that is, by some constriction, lack of control, or misuse of the voice or the body; or it may be due to some misconception of the nature of delivery, or to bad habits resulting from such misconceptions, unconscious imitation, or weakness.

No problem of education presents more difficulties than the improvement of delivery. Some even doubt the possibility of its development. The student should, therefore, at his first step glance carefully over the whole field, in order to secure a correct general conception of the nature of the work he is undertaking.*

At first thought, delivery is a very simple thing. To the student it seems the most superficial part of education; but on mature consideration it will be found to be one of the most complex subjects with which the mind has to deal, one of the most difficult problems that education has to meet.

Only a few facts need be mentioned to show this. It is *subjective*. A flower can be held before the eye, torn to pieces, and part studied in contrast with part; but delivery is the utterance of the highest faculties and powers, the subtlest thoughts and emotions, the deepest intuitions and impulses of the soul.

* See "The Province of Expression," for a more complete discussion of various aspects of the problem of delivery.

Again, it is not merely a study of conscious and voluntary actions, but is dependent upon the unity of conscious and unconscious, voluntary and spontaneous impulses. Every power of the mind, as well as every part of the body, plays a role more or less distinct; but at the same time, the simplest act of expression calls for a natural, even unconscious unity of all the powers of the mind and agents of the body. To develop expression, therefore, the subtlest intellectual, emotional, and physical actions and conditions must be stimulated and trained.

Beside all this, the problem is different in many respects for every personality. No two men are alike; and the distinct peculiarities of every character modify expression. If in developing delivery all men are made alike, expression will not be improved, but will be made artificial and conventional.

Again the work is difficult on account of the universal misconceptions regarding it. Students begin their work with the expectation that some secret will be conveyed which will give the mastery of the whole problem. So many think that it is merely physical, that they are prejudiced against any reference to mental action. So many regard it as a mere matter of manner, that it is difficult to awaken any attention to causes. So many regard it as merely the exhibition of external feats, that it is not easy to get them to observe the unconscious and spontaneous actions of their nature or to stimulate and direct them. So many regard it as superficial and mechanical that it is hard to get them to study the action of the whole man.

The problem of delivery is so important and yet so often misconceived that the student should weigh well each of the following propositions, which could be easily expanded into a volume. They aim to show the nature of delivery and the possibility of developing its elements and power.

1. Delivery is adequate in proportion as it tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, by every agent or modulation of the body.

2. All delivery aims to make men hear, understand, think, and feel.
3. Speech interests and moves us in proportion as it reveals adequately the emotion, relations, or attitude of the speaker toward his thought, and also in proportion to the weight of his character or personality.
4. To improve expression, stimulate a more harmonious action of the mind, a more natural and responsive use of voice and body, and secure more thorough knowledge of strong modes of execution, and develop greater skill and mastery in their use.
5. To improve expression develop the three elemental languages of man,—not only his verbal expression, but the two natural languages of tone and action, and bring them into harmony.
6. Develop harmoniously the elemental faculties and powers of man and bring them into greater unity and harmony with each other, and also into more intimate relationship with the languages whose natural function is to reveal their actions.
7. Develop all the languages of man to act in accordance with their own nature: not only those which act through representation, but also those that act by manifestation; not only those which are voluntary, but those which are involuntary.
8. Delivery is composed not only of conscious and voluntary actions, but of involuntary and unconscious elements, which can never be made directly voluntary without developing artificiality and unnaturalness; hence, true training for delivery must develop all elements harmoniously, each according to its own nature.
9. Secure insight into fundamentals as distinguished from the accidents of delivery, and practise such exercises as will develop the elementals and bring them into unity and harmony.
10. Develop vigor in the fundamental cause of all expression,—the process of thinking,—secure power to concentrate the mind, and to hold it upon idea after idea till it becomes so vivid as to quicken the impulse and dominate all the agents of expression.
11. Study not only the act of thinking in reproducing the thought and words of another, but speak in your own words the results of your own observation and thought.
12. Study the best literature, and become conscious of true simplicity, repose and other qualities of the noblest art, and embody these elements in the rendering of selected passages.
13. Stimulate and train the imaginative and creative faculties of the man by the study of great art of all kinds, so as to awaken right artistic feeling and develop taste.

14. Develop the normal and the elemental actions of every agent of voice and body concerned in expression, and bring them into unity and harmony.

15. Relate and unite all technical action to the actions of the mind of which they are the expression. Study the natural expression of the noblest people whose expression is most pleasing, and contrast their modes of execution with that which is weak, so as to be able to appreciate right modes of execution, and distinguish them from that which is perverted.

TO TEACHERS AND STUDENTS.

THE best exercises may be perverted by misuse. The study or diagnosis of delivery is one of the most difficult problems of teaching. The teacher, to develop it, must compare an infinite number of actions, and penetrate to that which is fundamental. It requires thorough knowledge of the actions of the mind and of the structure of the body; it requires knowledge of human nature and of the principles of art; it requires the most immediate application of the most advanced methods in education.

The lessons of this book are so arranged that the student is brought at once into contact with extracts from good literature. These are so arranged that illustrations can be found before the discussion, and others in different parts of the work can be selected, or it may accompany the Classics for Vocal Expression.

All theory must be made secondary to practice. The student must be set to reading, reciting, or speaking at once in order to make him conscious of his needs, and the necessity for training. The text-book is only a means of assistance, not an end in itself. The discussions have grown up in teaching, and are fragmentary, and are only meant to be read over by the student after performance or effort to express, to furnish additional light to what he finds from a study of himself.

Occasionally it is necessary to give a student a clear idea of some specific problem or exercise before he begins to read or practise, but it must be understood to be only a preliminary

hypothesis, to be proved or disproved by his own experiments in practice. The true scientific method is to have a preliminary hypothesis, and then experiment or observe for its establishment or disproval. The same principle is applicable to training.

One of the first difficulties to be met is to get a student to recognize the spontaneous activity of his own nature, and that this must directly cause all expression. The processes of his own thinking must furnish the basis, rather than any external rule.

All art consists primarily in doing, in execution; we cannot learn to swim without going into the water. The teacher must give his explanation in the very midst of practice. A student must be awakened to think. He must be given such problems as will reveal to him his own mistakes and imperfections, or make him conscious of attainment. The explanations are to be given to students to be read out of class. A part of the selections should be practised first with a few suggestions from the teacher, and others should be assigned for definite and special study, as laid down in the "Lessons." The teacher will be able soon to judge, by the way a student reads, whether he has observed the directions in his study or not.

At times, of course, the discussion of many points will be necessary, but too much theorizing and discussion will be injurious. A student must be kept in an attitude of execution. His understanding of the principles must be shown by his artistic rendering. Understanding is only a preliminary step. A student must first know, then do; and doing, he can become.

All the steps should be illustrated by reading, speaking, and by recitation. In the selections for recitation the student should always be brought into direct contact with literature. He should make his abridgments himself, and should in no case take a recitation from books of "Choice Selections." The student must be led to know and feel a whole poem before he attempts to recite a part of it, a whole play before he gives a scene, a whole oration before he give a paragraph, a whole novel before he can

give an abridgment. He must be taught how to read silently. This text-book can be used in many ways.

1. Cause the student to observe himself, to become conscious of his possibilities, of his ideal as well as of his actual, and to compare the one with the other.
2. Students must be led to observe and inspired to think at all hazards.
3. The student must receive before he can give; and the way truth is taken must determine the way it is given. Reception and manifestation, impression and expression, must be regarded as essential to each other.
4. Never give rules; awaken a conception of nature's processes and methods, and test expression by truthfulness to what is natural.
5. Give a few clear ideas, and hold students to the definite practice of an exercise which embodies these ideas. Remember, true practice is a struggle to realize an idea.
6. Study each student's peculiar power as well as needs. Remember that even the greatest critics have continually taken qualities for faults.
7. Interest and inspire students. Often change subject and form of literature, and correct any monotonous or mechanical relation to a subject.
8. Do not go too fast. Steps and lessons are divided in this book according to subjects, and not according to time to be taken; most students will require many hours of study and practice to master each step.
9. Have positive convictions and present the truth faithfully; but be sympathetic and receptive in regard to differences in modes of execution.
10. Remember that rarely do two people see anything from the same point of view. It is only the most exalted art that can reveal and determine a definite point of view.
11. Give students definite problems, and explanations of them, and prescribe long-continued practice.
12. State in a few words the results which have been found after each lesson, and indicate the point of advance in passing from step to step.
13. Allow students often to select what they best like in literature, and encourage them to express this in their own way.
14. Give great poems and literary masterpieces to be studied.
15. Never say that a certain piece must be given with a certain "tone." Thought and passion are greater than any tone. The poem is greater than its body. No two poems in the world can have exactly the same expression, nor any two men express the same poem in precisely the same way.

NOTE. — Poetry in this book is often printed as prose, to aid, not to hinder, the study of metre and rhythm and their expression through the voice.

1. TO THE CUCKOO.

O BLITHE new-comer! I have heard, I hear thee and rejoice:
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee bird, or but a wandering Voice?
While I am lying on the grass, thy twofold shout I hear:
From hill to hill it seems to pass, at once far off and near.

Though babbling only to the vale of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale of visionary hours.
Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring! even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing, a voice, a mystery.

The same whom in my school-boy days I listen'd to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways, in bush, and tree, and sky.
To seek thee did I often rove through woods, and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love; still long'd for, never seen!

And I can listen to thee yet, can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget that golden time again.
O blessed bird! the earth we pace again appears to be
An unsubstantial, fairy place, that is fit home for Thee!

Wordsworth

2. THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT.

AVENGE, O Lord! Thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones.
Forget not: in Thy book record their groans
Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant, that from these may grow
A hundred-fold, who, having learnt Thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

Milton.

I.

IDEAS AND ELEMENTAL RELATIONS.

I. STUDY OF NATURE.

IF we carefully study the two poems on the preceding page, we feel that noble emotion impelled the two authors to write them; that they simply gave their impulses voice and words. We find that we can read them merely as words, or statements of facts, and that in this case the reading is cold and mechanical. The expression, too, of both poems,—through the voice, its tones, inflections, and pitch,—can be made essentially the same.

As we study deeper, however, and become permeated by the spirit of the two poems,—when the ideas become visions in our own mind, and we become thoroughly filled with the emotion,—the vocal rendering of the two begins to differ more and more widely. Each of them begins to have a distinct and definite character. Thus in every poem there is not only a peculiar thought, but also a peculiar spirit, a specific impulse or feeling, which is somehow awakened in the heart of the reader, and which gives definite character to his rendering.

Art is founded upon the study of nature. Of all forms of art, Vocal Expression is the nearest to nature; for it is an art in which nature furnishes not only the impulse and the idea, but also the materials and the agents of manifestation. In all natural expression, man is impelled to speak as the bird is to sing.

Other arts have more or less of a mechanical nature. The mastery of them is primarily dependent upon the control of technical mechanical instruments: the painter must gain command of his brush, the musician of his instrument, the sculptor

of his chisel. The speaker, however, has no tool except his own voice and body; and although for effective expression he must thoroughly train and secure control of these agents, still they have been more or less under his control ever since his first childish struggle to command them. Besides, many of the actions of the voice are involuntary, if not unconscious. A genuine laugh is purely spontaneous: the chief effort of the will is to restrain it. In conversation, we adapt the expression of our thoughts and feelings; the inflections, the degrees of emphasis, and the length of pauses, are involuntarily, if not unconsciously, varied according to the understanding of our hearers. Everyone tells a story to a little child more simply than to a man. Anyone conversing in the midst of noise unconsciously increases his voice so as to make himself heard. The voice is modulated according to the size of the audience, the character of the hall, or the distance of the hearer.

Many elements of expression are so deep and mystic that they can be awakened only by stimulating their cause. They cannot be adequately performed mechanically, or by a direct, conscious action of the will. To secure them in all their plenitude and force, such an idea or situation must be created by the mind as will awaken the feeling that prompts them.

Vocal Expression is more intense and more adequately manifestive of life than any other art. It is a subjective art, whereas the other arts are objective; but though other arts have an objective, permanent body, and may live for thousands of years, and Vocal Expression dies the moment it is born, still, the transitory art includes more life, and a greater number of elements, than the statue or the painting. The subjective art makes up in intensity what it lacks in permanence. The plenitude of the momentary effect, the deep transfusion and manifestation of nature's life, compensate for the lack of permanent body.

From all this it is clear that, in order to improve expression, a direct and sympathetic observation of nature is fundamentally

necessary. The mind and the voice, the soul and the body, the fundamental modes of nature's actions, — all must be thoroughly understood.

As all art is founded upon nature, it follows that certain characteristics of nature are reproduced in art. The characteristics of the one must furnish the laws of the other. To improve expression it is necessary to observe the spontaneous expression of nature herself, and to find the elemental characteristics. What are the universal qualities of nature and art? What are the fundamental elements which are always found in nature's processes, and are reproduced in all true art, but which are always absent in poor, mechanical, or artificial art? Naturalness is considered the highest characteristic of reading and speaking. What do we mean by it? — what are its elements?

First, nature is full of life and growth. All natural impulses are an outgrowth, — they are *from within, outward*. Expression in nature is from a mystic centre to a manifest surface. The leaves of the tree express the plenitude of life welling up from the roots; the rosebud blooms from a pressure outward of inner fullness; the difference between an animal and a machine consists in the fact that in the machine force is applied externally to the mechanism, whereas in the animal there seems to be a centre of life and impulse, — the animal acts from within, the machine is moved from without.

Poor art has the characteristic of the machine, — noble art has the qualities of nature; and this is especially true of speaking. All noble, all natural speaking is from within outward. The central action of the mind is predominant, and actions of voice or body are subordinate; "it is the soul that must speak."

Again, not only does nature act from within outward, but the action seems to come from one centre. The highest product of physical nature is an organism. Unity is the highest law of art; all parts must seem to inhere. Every word of a poem must seem to be inevitable, — it must not seem to be possible to add



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